

BV

813

.C65

THE RELATION OF BAPTIZED  
CHILDREN TO THE CHURCH.

=====

◆◆◆◆◆ COPPIN, ◆◆◆◆◆

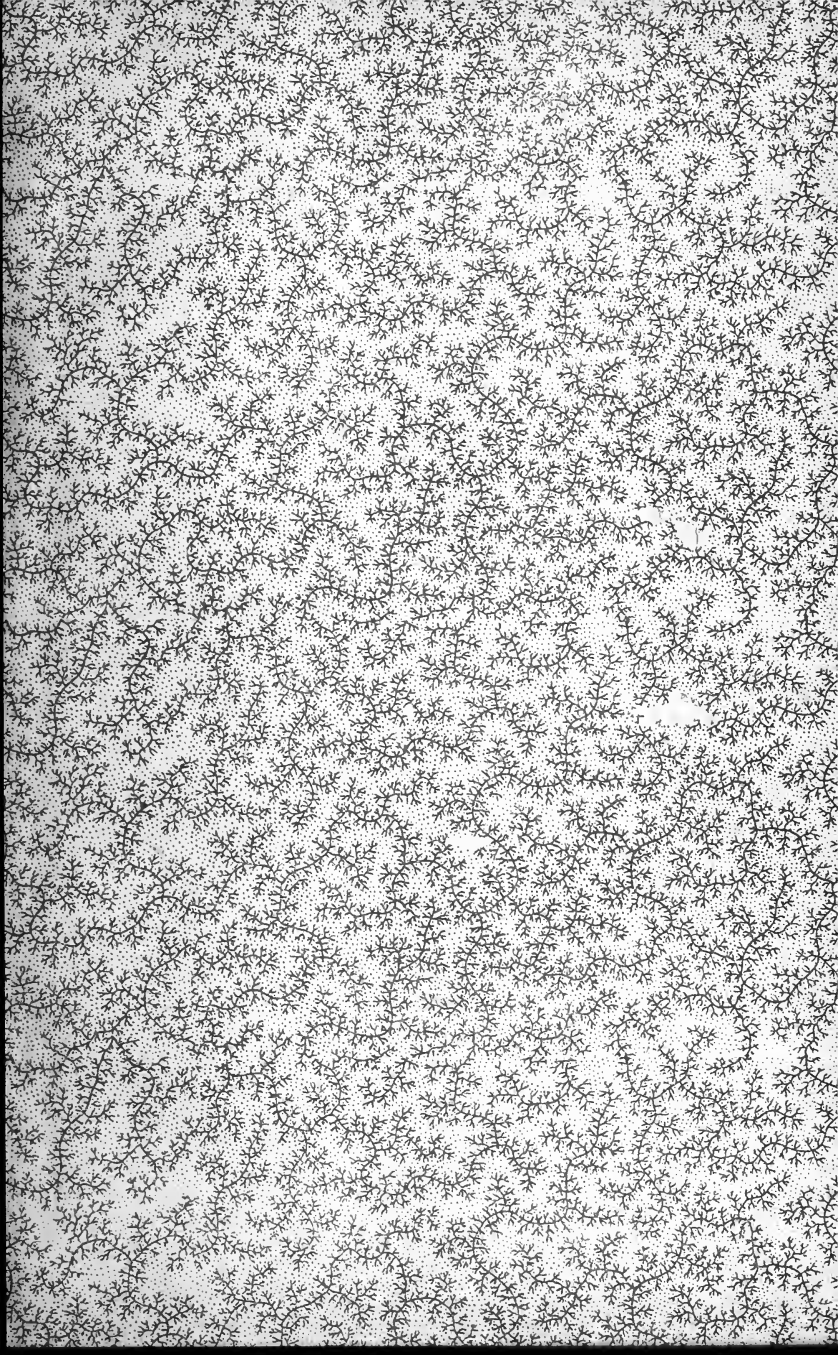
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

BV 813

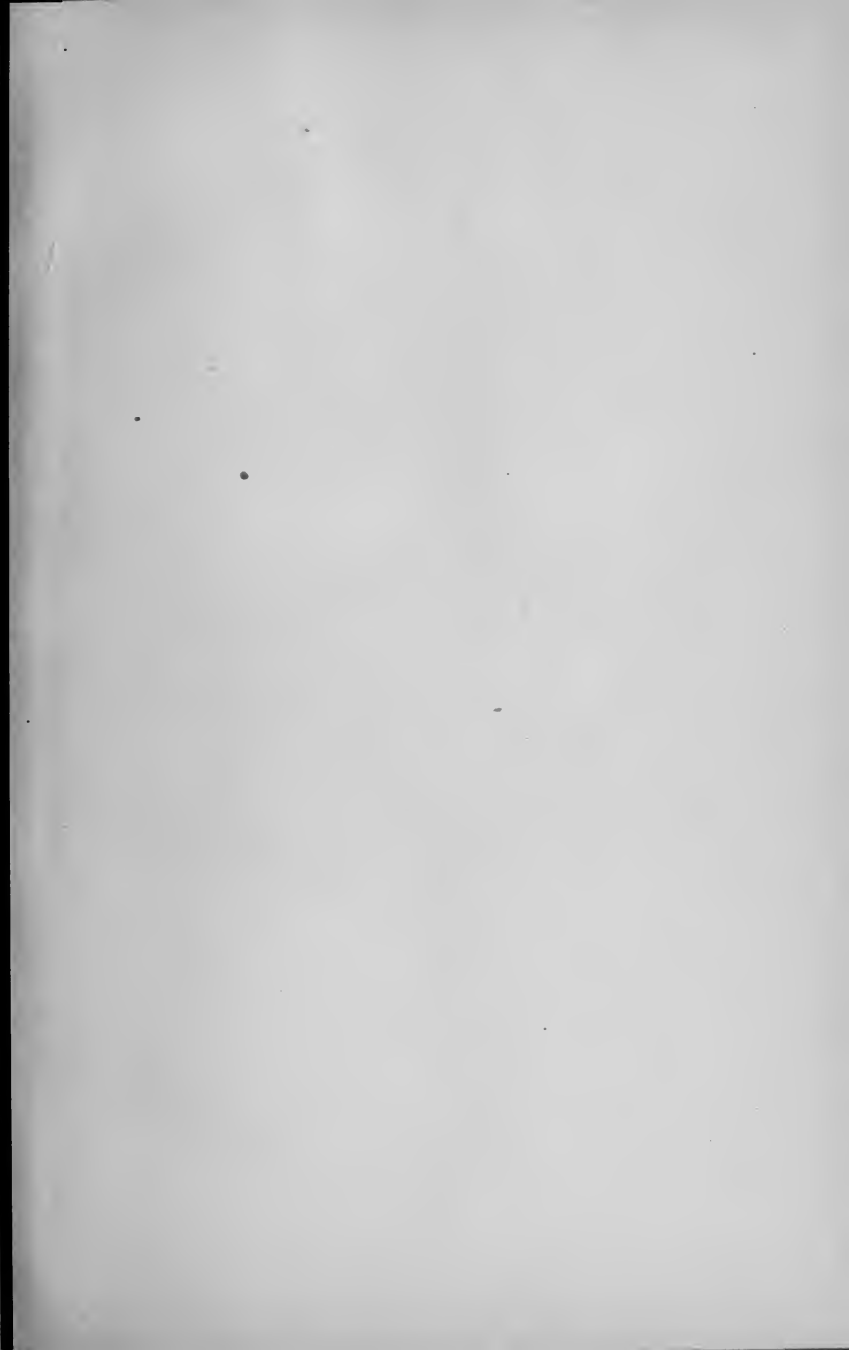
Chap. .... Copyright No. ....

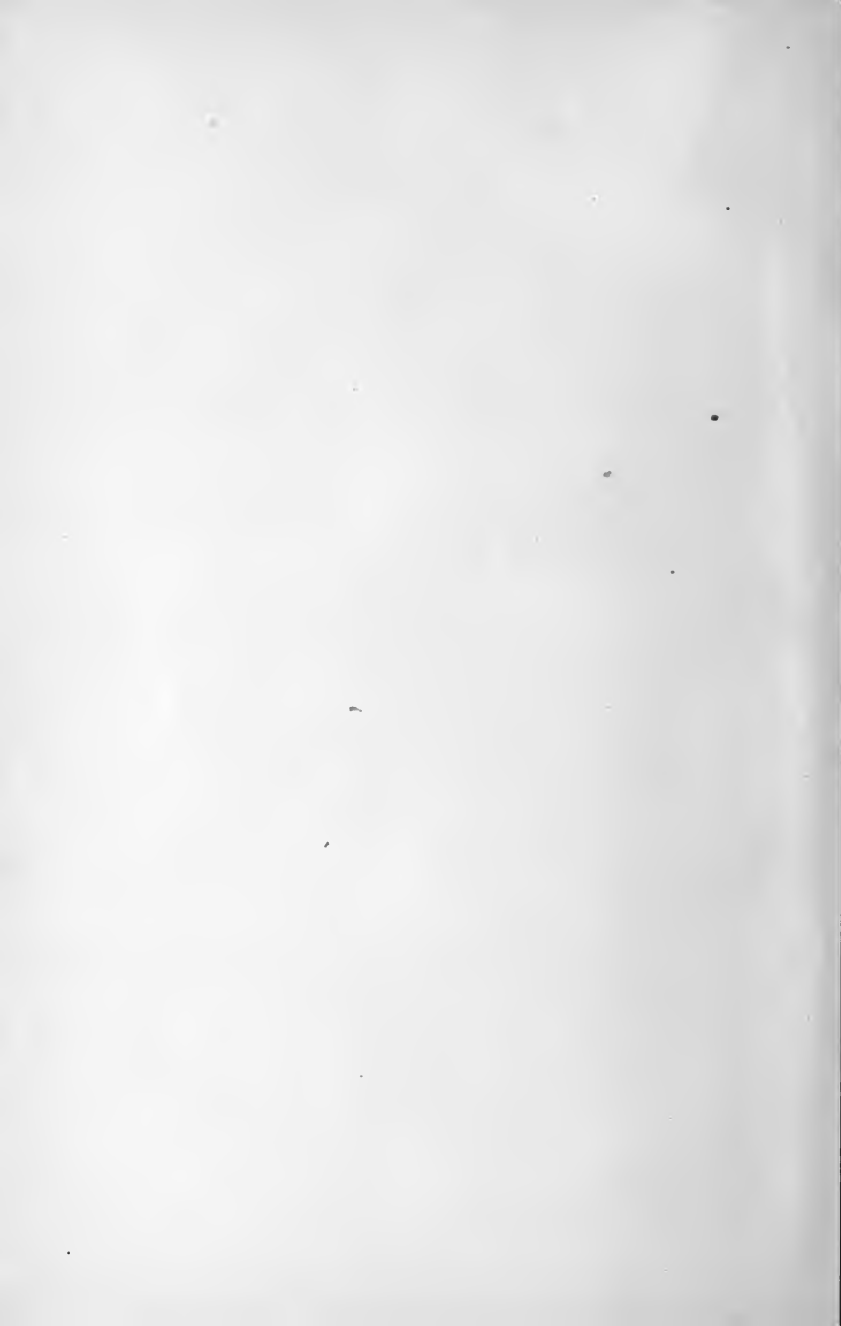
Shelf . C 65

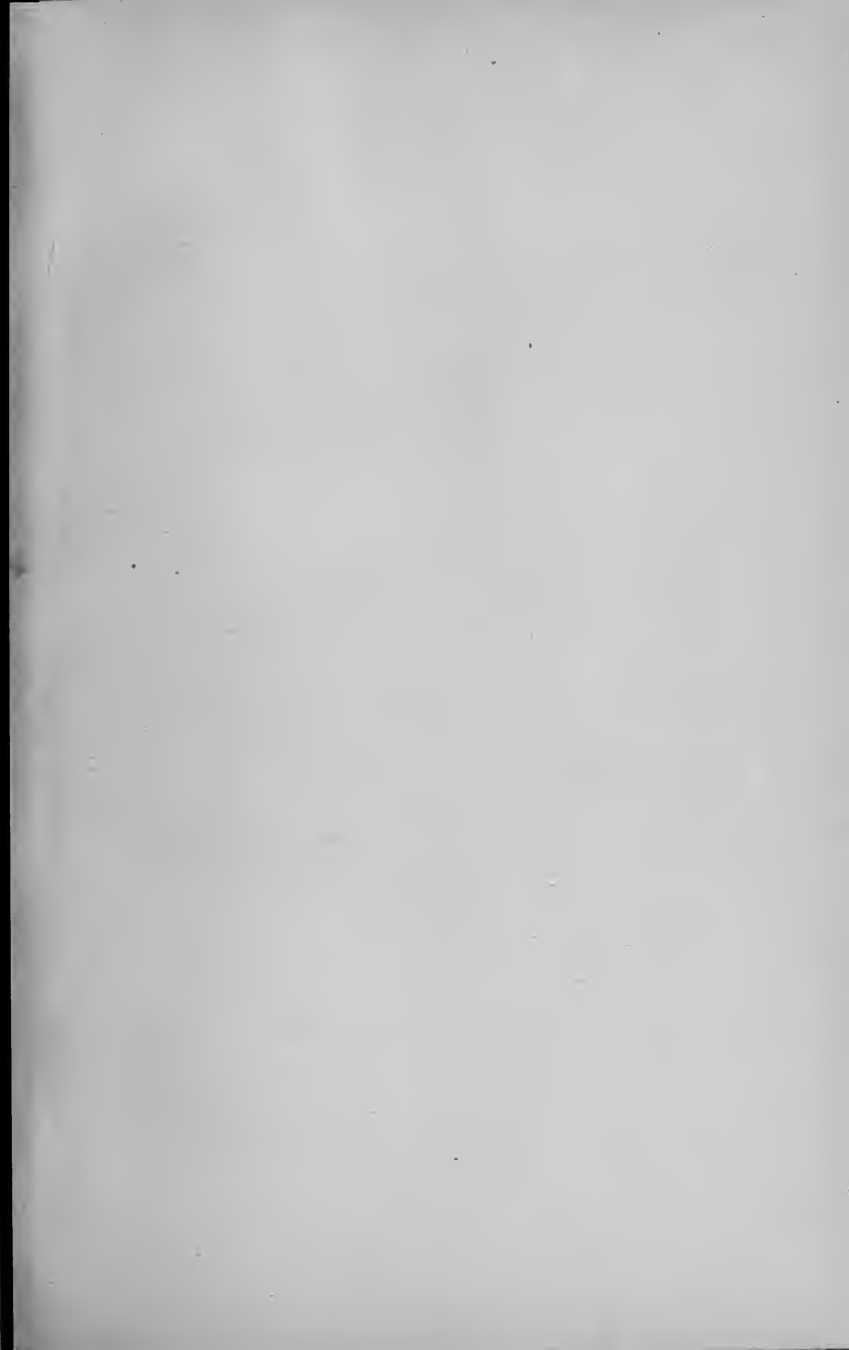
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

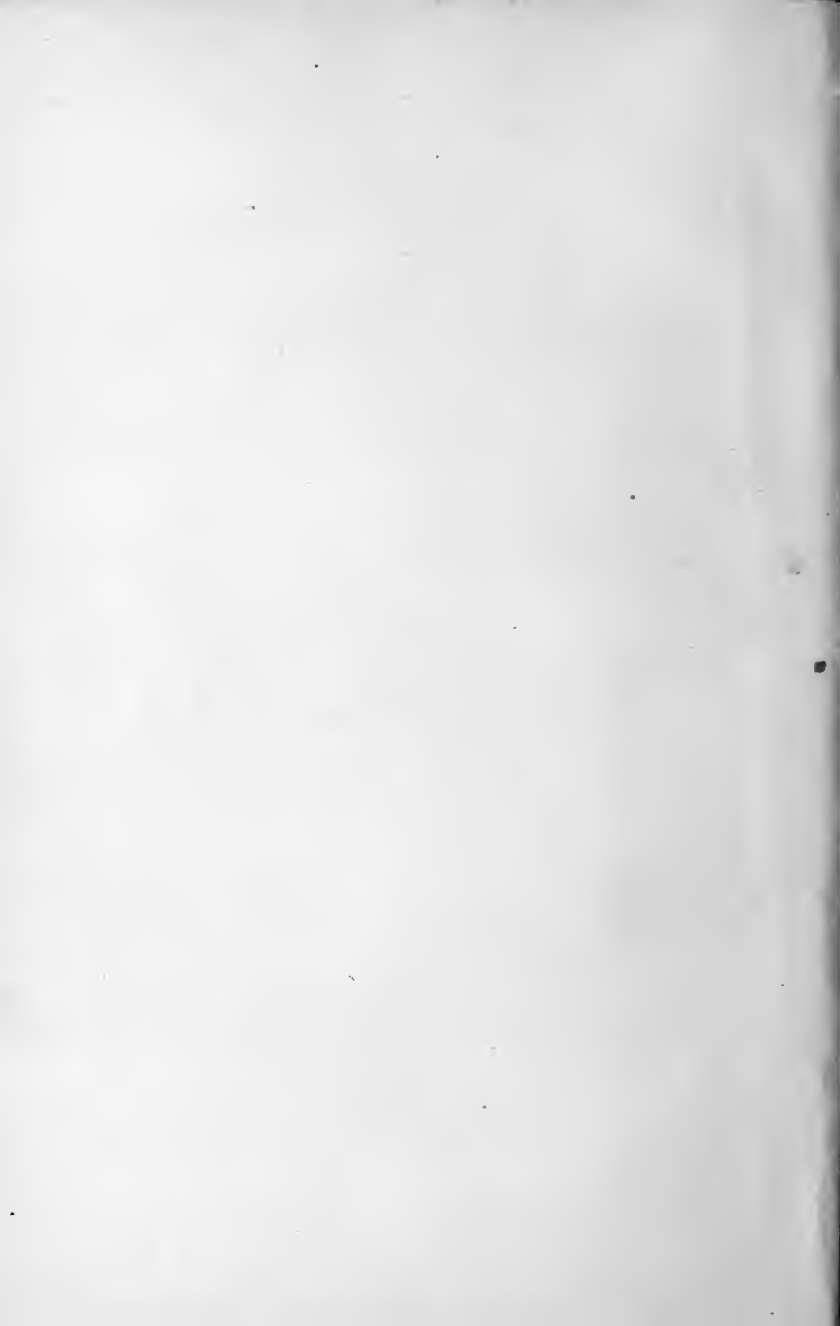












THE  
Relation of Baptized Children  
to the Church.

---

By <sup>rev</sup> L. J. COPPIN, D.D.

---

*no claim*



PHILADELPHIA, PA.:

A. M. E. PUBLICATION DEPARTMENT,

631 PINE STREET.

1890.

o



BV813  
.C65

Handwritten text in the upper right corner of the page.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS.

---

	PAGE.
Preface, . . . . .	5
1. Judaism and Christianity, . . . . .	9
2. Theory and Practice, . . . . .	29
3. Mode of Baptism, . . . . .	46
4. Condition and Mode of receiving Children into full Membership, . . . . .	62

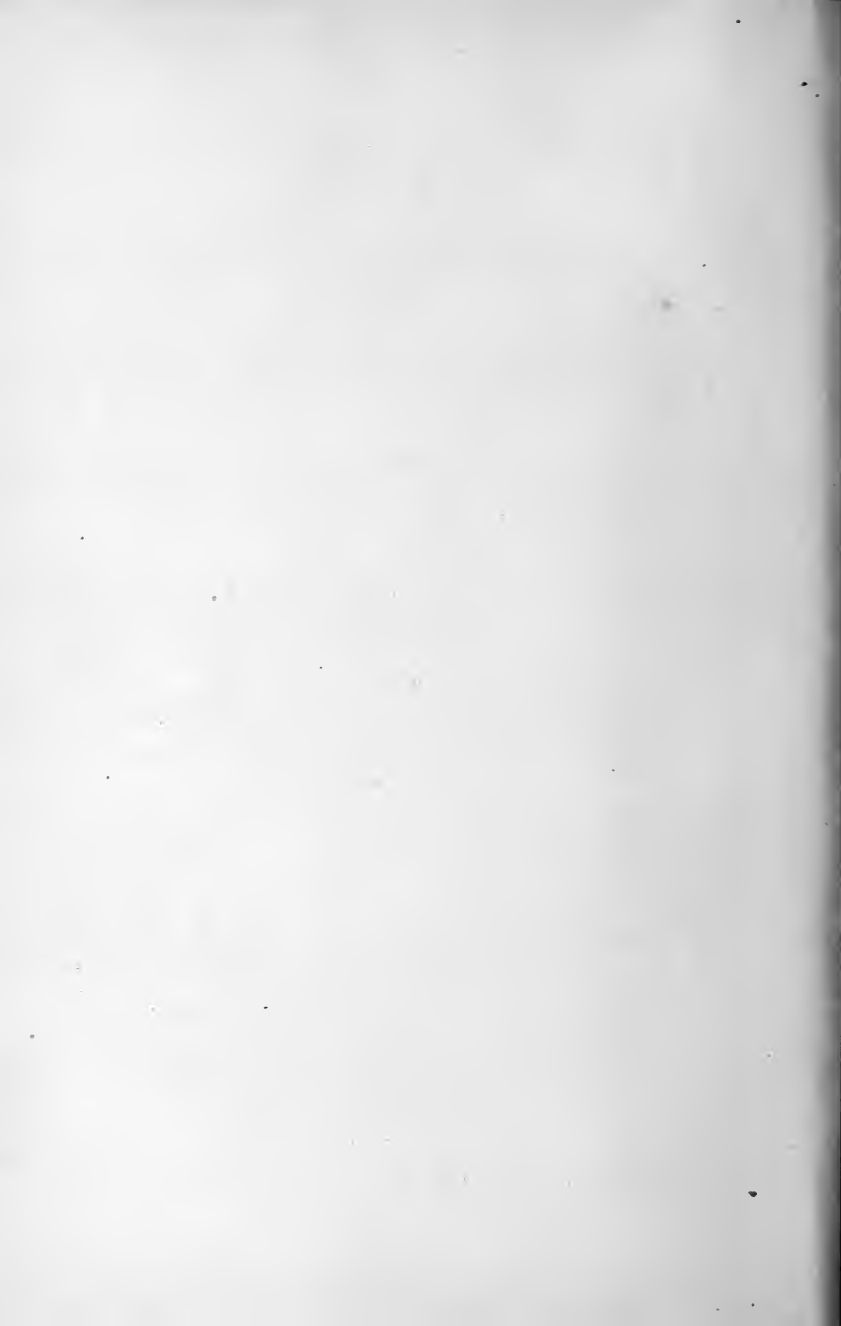
---

## ADDENDA.

---

### THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

1. Its Origin, . . . . .	79
2. Design, . . . . .	81
3. Duty and Qualifications of Teachers, . . . . .	87
4. How to make Room for it, . . . . .	98



## PREFACE.

---

**I**N presenting this little work to the public, it is earnestly hoped that a careful perusal of its contents will awaken a new interest in a subject that deserves careful and serious attention. My conclusions are reached after twenty-five years of membership in the Christian Church, all of which have been spent in official capacity, both in the Church proper and in the Sunday-school department of the Church. I have observed how the children of some families wander away from the Church as they reach manhood and womanhood, while those of others grow up in the Church and never leave it. I have also observed that when series of special meetings are held, and many adults are converted and brought into the Church, the prevailing opinion

seems to be that if fifty per cent. remain the effort has been a success. Of course the other half drifts away with those who are called backsliders. The thought that has followed me through these years is this: Is such a condition of things absolutely necessary? if not, where lies the trouble? This led to a more careful reading of the Word of God and a study of the Discipline of my Church. I am satisfied that both the Bible and the Discipline warrant the position which I take in the following pages, and that the trouble is not in the plan of salvation, but in the neglect of Christian parents and Christian people generally to do their whole duty.

This humble contribution upon the subject is given in good faith, and with no other desire than to do my share of the work of saving our children from sin and ruin.

THE AUTHOR.

# Relation of Baptized Children to the Church.

---

## CHAPTER I.

---

### JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY.

---

GOD, whether in nature or revelation, is a God of system and order. It is this fact clearly seen that immortalizes Pope's saying, "Order is heaven's first law." The orderly development and extension of the kingdom of heaven on earth is a beautiful and systematic unfolding of a great plan, marked at every step with evident design. The Church organized in the tent of Abraham, and handed down by patriarch and prophet through the ages, is unique. From Abraham to Christ there can be traced an unbroken chain of events,

all of which conspire to the establishment of the Christian Church, and this makes it the legitimate offspring of the Jewish Church. Long before the Messiah came, the Messianic idea was prevalent among the Jewish people. I grant that the entire significance and scope were not fully comprehended, even by the foremost of Messianic writers; but they had the right notion about it, and the unfolding and enlargement of it were the work of succeeding generations. A peace kingdom, a reign of righteousness, a subjugation of evil forces, a supreme central power that would radiate an influence upon all people, and gather them, and subdue them, was the conception of the prophets who are called Messianic. But all the time the fact that this movement should be of Jewish origin was not lost sight of. At last, when the Messiah came, "He came unto His own." And, again, when the first command was given by Him to His disciples to go forth and proclaim His presence and mission, they were told that

their work was among the Jews only; not a city of the Gentiles was to be entered by them.

This initiatory work being done, the disciples returned to await further orders. When they were again sent forth it was with the following commission: "Go ye therefore, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

The limitations of the first command were but for a time; now, in keeping with the original plan, all restrictions are removed, and all nations are to be brought into the fold.

But how were disciples to be made? That is, by what rite, if any, were they to be inducted into this newly organized Church, and made to feel entitled to its blessings and to its privileges? The method of making Jews was well understood. Circumcision was the solitary way, at least so far as ceremony was concerned. If a man rejected circumcision, he thereby made himself an alien to the common heritage of the covenant people.

During the flight from Egypt and the meanderings and wars in the wilderness, this sacred rite of circumcision was neglected; but it was held in solemn remembrance, and as soon as Canaan was reached it was administered even upon the adults. I hold, then, that without circumcision (unless it was impossible to perform it) no man was within the limits of the covenant people; but with it, no one dare dispute his rights. Now we come to the pivotal point: The Old or Jewish Church was not destroyed, but reorganized, and this is an important fact which should be remembered.

Whatever else our Lord may have taught enigmatically, He taught plainly the relation of the Old and New Dispensations. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfill," were His utterances in the sermon on the Mount.

Again and again He quoted from the Old Testament. When He said, "Search the Scriptures," He gave as a reason the fact that they testified of Him. When He

gave a rebuke to the disciples who were journeying to Emmaus, it was because they were slow to understand the Scriptures concerning Himself.

Now, regarding Christ as the connecting link, the Jewish and Christian Churches were united in Him, and the work begun by the former was carried on by the latter on a larger scale. Our Lord Himself took charge of the Church as reorganized, introduced and expounded its doctrines, and set forth its claims. John the Baptist, acting as the forerunner of Christ, introduced the rite of baptism by water, as the door of entrance into the new Covenant. Our Lord accepted this new rite, and was Himself baptized. The work of John the Baptist was substantially completed when he baptized the Lord Jesus. Previous to this act, John the Baptist ceased not to proclaim the coming kingdom and to initiate the newcomers; but as soon as Christ practically indorsed the work, John said, "He must increase, but I must decrease." Some of John's disciples immediately left

him and followed Christ, who thenceforth became the center of influence and authority. Baptism was continued by the disciples of our Lord in His immediate presence, and when it was established beyond a possible doubt that baptism, not circumcision, was the door of entrance, Christ left the region of the Jordan, and went with His disciples into Galilee, and turned His attention to preaching. He announced that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and called upon men to repent and believe the Gospel. During the remainder of our Lord's ministry, the Church work was under His supervision. Now mark well the way in which it was formally and finally transferred to His successors. They were commanded to wait at Jerusalem until they received the Holy Ghost as the seal of their mission; then they were to go forth and make disciples, and baptism was again specifically named as the ceremony to be performed in making them. How carefully the door of entrance was guarded! Notwithstanding that

the rite of baptism had been most definitely indorsed by our Lord, yet He left no room for a misunderstanding upon the subject. And so, upon handing the work over to new hands, the charge to observe this new rite was solemnly renewed. Thus the work of reorganization was complete, and the Church regularly handed over to the Apostles. I do not see how any one reading the Scriptures without the blindness of prejudice can fail to see, first, that the Christian Church is the successor of the Jewish; and, second, that baptism in the Christian Church regularly succeeds the circumcision of the Jewish.

The next thing in order to be considered is, who are the proper subjects for baptism? Concerning circumcision, the subjects were all of the Jewish people, the children included. Indeed, it began with the children.

Now, in the absence of a command to the contrary, it would be but logical to conclude that the same rule must obtain in the Christian Church. According to this, then,

I should say in answer to the question, Who are the proper subjects for baptism? Beginning with the children, all who accept Christ as their Saviour. A large majority of the Christian world take this ground, but there are those who hold that children are not to be included. Much has been said upon this subject of infant baptism, but, as by many the propriety of administering it is still questioned, it may be well to give a few additional reasons for indorsing it. In the New Testament, no express command is given to baptize children; and this, all things else considered, is a point in favor of it, instead of against it.

It is so clearly inferred that one has to go out of his way to steer clear of it. It is taken for granted and, therefore, not mentioned.

We have already shown that baptism takes the place of circumcision, and it is well known that children were taken into the Jewish Church by circumcision.

In the light of *these* two facts alone, then, how can we in reason deny the children of

Christians the blessing enjoyed by the Jewish children, when we are so ready, as adults, to claim the blessing which was enjoyed by their parents?

If in this new arrangement the children are not *named* for *admission*, neither are they named for exclusion.

The command was simply to baptize; the subjects, as a matter of fact, are not named at all (see St. Matt. xxviii. 19), and why should they be? I think it is Hibbard on Baptism who makes the point, that if a man who had his sheep and lambs all designated by a certain mark should give an order for the mark to be changed, the shepherd would be presumptuous to leave out the lambs, unless expressly ordered to do so. Now, it is by just such an inference that we hold to infant baptism. We have no command to leave out the children.

Again, granting that there is no express command given to baptize children, we have another parallel in the matter of administering the Lord's Supper. There were no women present when it was

ordained, but has the Church, at any period of its existence, excluded them from a participation in the body and blood of our Lord? If, then, baptism is binding upon Christians, and if children are not to be excluded, they must bear some definite relation to the Christian Church; they must have certain rights and privileges; there must be a principle involved. But a step farther: Did our Lord, the great Founder of the Christian Church, say *anything* about the children and their relation to the kingdom of heaven on earth, by which His loving voice can be interpreted?

Fortunately we are not left entirely to inference. Our Lord has spoken most definitely upon the subject. The following quotations bear directly upon the spiritual relation of children to Christ's kingdom:

"Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (St. Matt. xviii. 3).

"Suffer the little children to come unto

Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God" (St. Mark x. 14).

In St. Luke xviii. 15-17, the statement is similar to that above quoted in St. Mark, except, in St. Mark, the word is children, translated from *παιδία*, while in St. Luke it is infants, translated from *βρεφη*. The occurrence of both words is fortunate, as it removes the possibility of a doubt as to the age of the persons referred to. For some have suggested that the phrase *little children* might have the same meaning in this place as that generally given it in the Epistles of St. John.

But concerning this point it should be remembered that the word in the Epistles that is translated children is *τέκνια*, which, though sometimes interchanged with *παιδία* when children is the meaning, is almost always used to express a state of kindly feeling, which has no reference at all to age. Therefore, *darlings* would be a much better translation for *τέκνια* than would children. Now let us notice in order this set of words:

*παιδία*, children ; they may be large or small.

*Τέκνια*, darlings ; they may be children or adults.

*Βρέφη*, babies, or infants ; certainly never adults. Now, it is important to remember that the word *τεκνια*—darlings—never occurs in our Lord's reference to children. I think it is abundantly established, then, that the persons of whom our Lord spoke were small children. But some have acknowledged, as acknowledge they must, that the persons referred to by our Lord were small children ; but, they say, what He meant to teach was this : those who humble themselves and become in humility, innocence, etc., like children. Well, granting that His meaning involves this idea, you must remember that one thing is settled beyond a shadow of doubt, namely, that He assigned those very little children in question a place in His kingdom : their membership in the kingdom of God is emphatically declared, and that is just what we are now endeavoring to prove.

The first thing to settle is, are children members of Christ's spiritual kingdom which He came to establish on earth? How they came so to be involves another question.

Having shown that children are recognized citizens of the "kingdom of heaven," we come next to consider what citizenship in that kingdom involves.

The terms, kingdom of heaven and kingdom of God, are synonymous, and mean the spiritual reign of the Messiah on earth, the kingdom of God's grace. Those who belong to this kingdom were by Divine arrangement organized into a visible Church; hence, the terms kingdom of heaven, kingdom of God, mean, secondly, the visible Church. Now do not consider this far-fetched, for if we say that the visible Church is not the kingdom of heaven in its visible aspect, it makes the phrase simply figurative, and refers only to a kind of influence upon earth, but not something visibly set forth in the lives and conduct of those who are given membership therein.

So, to avoid meaning worse than nothing, we must concede the point that the reign of the Messiah on earth is only seen and known as it operates in and through the Christian Church. Since, then, the kingdom of heaven is the visible Church, and children are members of the kingdom of heaven, it follows, by a syllogism, that children are members of the visible Church.

Did it ever occur to you that children have this advantage of adults, viz.: the adult gets his membership in the kingdom through the visible Church, *i.e.*, through an acceptation of the plan of salvation as brought to his knowledge through the teaching of the Christian Church, while children come in exactly at the other door? They are in the kingdom of heaven in spite of the visible Church. So when we deny them a right to ceremonial membership in the Church as *organized*, we are simply denying them the less, while they, by Divine right, are already in possession of the greater. That children are included in the covenant of redemption no one denies,

and it is of the greatest interest to bear in mind that they are so affected by their relation to Christ through the Atonement that they begin life in a state of exemption from original guilt. This statement does not deny the fact that they are born in the image of fallen Adam, and that they inherit from him a corrupt nature; but it does affirm that they sustain a twofold relation: a natural relation to Adam, and a spiritual relation to Christ.

This twofold relation is not a contradiction. The same is true of an adult.

Even after his conversion there remains in him a primal bias to evil. He must watch and pray, lest he enter into temptation.

The flesh continues its strivings against the spirit; he is still tempted and tried, and without Divine assistance he cannot stand. If, then, the adult holds this twofold relation, it must be easy to see the possibility of the child's holding a similar one. As my subject has to do with baptized children, one may be led to infer that I am an advocate

of baptismal regeneration ; but let me say, once for all, I am not. I accord nothing to a baptized child that I do not to an unbaptized one, except external privileges. I have said elsewhere that, without the regeneration that comes of conscious faith, all infants are by virtue of the Atonement placed in a state of gracious acceptance, which is equivalent to the state reached by the adult through justifying faith and obedience.

But another question arises: Do the children for whom we are claiming Church privileges on account of their baptism need to be converted? This depends altogether upon what we mean by conversion. In the words of our Lord, "Except ye be converted," the word translated converted is *straphete*, from the verb *strepho*, which means to turn. This turning may be either of the body or mind. In the middle voice it would mean, to turn one's-self. Again, it may mean to turn from a good to a bad purpose. However, it means to turn from a given position, or

belief, or course of action to its opposite. It will be important in this connection to notice that our Lord never said concerning children that they must be converted, or born again ; but it was concerning adults that He used this language ; whereas, concerning the children, He says, Of such is the kingdom of heaven. It is only when they come to the years of accountability, and enter upon a life of disobedience, that He says they must change their course. I think we might as well hold correct views concerning native depravity, original sin and actual transgression.

No man ever was or ever will be held responsible for Adam's sins. This would be unjust, and God is just. Every man is to be punished for his own sins, and no one can sin till he is capable of committing a moral act. The sins of the fathers that are visited upon the children, as spoken of in the second commandment, are the sins of the fathers that have been adopted by the children and thus made their own ; they consequently fall heir to the same punish-

ment that was inflicted upon their parents; but it does not and could not mean that an innocent child, who never sinned, will be punished for his father's sins. But to put the question in another form: Have children a sinful nature at birth? and is not a work of grace needed in order to make them heirs of the kingdom?

I answer, yes; but, thanks to a wise and loving Heavenly Father, who gave His Son to redeem the world, children included, this necessary work is done for them by the Atonement, else how dare we claim that our children, dying in infancy, are saved. Certainly it is not the accident of death that saves them, nor is it logical or sensible to infer that the Atonement benefits them, provided they die, but not otherwise. In order to present the subject, as it appears to me, I suggest the following formula:

1. Children are born with a depraved nature, in the image of fallen Adam; but their salvation is secured by the Atonement.
2. They cannot sin until they are capable

of performing moral actions, hence they are in a state of gracious acceptance, and so remain till they reach the years of moral responsibility.

3. They are members of Christ's kingdom, hence of the Church, which is the visible or objective aspect of that kingdom.

4. Children when baptized are ceremonially handed over to the Church, and at once, by virtue of this initiatory rite, have certain claims upon and rights in that Church as an organization.

5. Those rights and privileges are, as a matter of fact, the very same that are enjoyed by any other member ; but children should be exempted from certain disciplinary regulations, and from the obligations to take communion and perform other Church duties until they are capable of understanding such obligations. Then, even when that period of understanding is reached, they are bound to subscribe to them, in order to deserve their punishment or enjoy their blessings.

It is the indispensable duty of the Chris-

tian Church to begin the work of instructing the children in those things as soon as they are able to understand them. This instruction, faithfully and properly given, will enable the child, even when quite young, to have a fair knowledge of what the Church teaches concerning Christianity. One of the most pious women I know says, she can remember distinctly things which occurred when she was but three years of age, but she cannot remember when she did not love the Lord. Of course, this result came only of faithful and timely training, and is a proof of what can be accomplished under proper direction.

## CHAPTER II.

---

### THEORY AND PRACTICE.

---

ALL regularly organized churches have perhaps a theory upon this subject of child training, but what about the practice? A theory without practice is worthless. What is the theory of the A. M. E. Church upon this subject? See Book of Discipline, page 125, section iii. There the minister in charge is required by a "shall" to

1. Gather in the children.
2. Instruct them in the Catechism of our Church.
3. Preach to them on the subject of education.
4. Talk with them at their homes.
5. Explain to them the nature of religion.
6. Take the names of those who have

been truly awakened and admit them to society.

7. Form them into classes for the purpose of giving them religious instructions.

8. Teach them the nature, privileges, design and obligations of baptism.

9. He shall further appoint a suitable leader for each class to instruct it in his absence, and recommend to him those who are suitable to be admitted on trial.

I think it would be difficult to find in any church a larger array of requirements concerning the religious care of children. But what comes of all this? I have been a communicant member of the Church since 1865 (twenty-four years), and have been in the ministry since 1876 (thirteen years), and I have not, in a single instance, seen those provisions practiced by any one. And more than this, whenever I have attempted to do so, I have been told that the idea was a new and dangerous one, and was un-Methodistic.

I have conversed with a large number of the leading ministers of our Church

upon the subject, and with but few exceptions they have bidden me be careful.

And so it is; the disciplinary requirements, under the head of "Duty to Children," remain a dead letter as to practice, and it is clear to any close observer that the sentiment of the Church is against its practice.

If during any given quarter, on a circuit or in a station, no adults die, however many children may die, no matter what their age or when baptized, when the question is reached in the Quarterly Conference, "How many have died this quarter," the answer is, "None." Let us draw a picture. Here is a child of a member of the Church; it has been baptized at the altar; its name has been recorded upon the Church register; it has joined the Sunday-school and has been again registered there. During its illness it has been visited by the teacher of the class to which it belongs in Sunday-school; its death is reported to the minister, who attends the funeral; in his address he

refers to its Sunday-school career, and tells the parents that they have an angel in heaven. He holds Quarterly Conference the same night, and the recording steward answers question eleven, by saying that nobody has died this quarter, and the secretary promptly records it as if it were true. This picture is not overdrawn; it is the invariable practice of our Church.

Now I, for one, believe it is time to look squarely at this matter, and call upon the Church to demand that its ministers carry out the requirements of the discipline.

From what I have learned by conversing with thoughtful men upon the subject, the difficulty seems to be this: how shall we induct the child into the Church when it reaches the years of *moral responsibility*? "He has not been born again," says one; "he has not been converted," says another; "he must have a new heart," says a third. Then another, who is quite confident that he is right, says, "he is too young." Well, I think all this brings us into quite a dilemma. If these things be

true, I see nothing to do but allow the child to go out and mingle with the world, get steeped in all its vices, then let the Church send for an evangelist, an expert, get up a protracted meeting and go in hot pursuit after the prodigal, and catch him if you can. But if this course is absolutely necessary, then I say that our whole religious system is a house upon the sand, and is safe only provided a storm doesn't come.

Is it not possible for me to meet my child at the age of moral responsibility, tell him that he was baptized and why; tell him that Jesus died to save him, and that from his baptism till now I have held myself bound by vows to see that he obeyed the Lord; and now that he is old enough to know the nature and end of the sacrament of baptism I can no longer be surety for him, but he must take upon himself the vows which I have been carrying? Now, if we grant, as grant we must, that the child is not held responsible for natural depravity, but only for actual sins

committed by himself, it must be easy to see that there is no great sacrifice for him to make upon approaching conscious responsibility. How can he feel the remorse and shame and contrition of one who has been openly and willfully living a life of sin for many years? Teach the child that he should truly repent and ask God's forgiveness for any sin that he has committed since his conscious knowledge of sin. Be sure to tell him that if he does so, he will be forgiven by God. Tell him what a dreadful thing it would be to turn his back upon the Lord who died for him, and to dishonor his parents who stood surety for him when he was too young to act for himself. Tell him that at a certain time the class to which he belongs will be presented for admission on trial, and that if he consents to give himself to the Lord, He will receive him, but if he refuses to do so, he willfully rejects the only means of salvation.

Let some such course be wisely and faithfully pursued, and I venture to say

that a large majority of our children would never enter upon a life of wretchedness and sin.

But someone will probably say, this method is too easy to be genuine; but he who takes this stand must be content to be illogical.

If a number of persons start out on a journey, destined for a certain place, some may go by rail, some by boat, some in carriage or on horseback; others still may walk. They will arrive at their destination at different periods, but once being there, the fact that they are there is the same in each case. Hence, no one can dispute the genuineness of the presence of the person. The only thing left for him would be to criticise the manner of coming. In like manner, if a person is Christ's at all, he is genuinely His, no matter how he came so to be. Do not, therefore, mistake the *thing itself* for the method of accomplishing it. Now, it is the "more excellent way" that I here insist upon, and I do insist upon it for the following reason: First,

because our Lord said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." O how we delight to make this quotation when we are addressing our Sunday-schools! How, then, can we forbid them? Could our Lord have spoken more plainly on the subject? When the disciples asked Him concerning who should be greatest in the kingdom, did He not stand a child in the midst of them and refer to it as a guide for them?

Let us refer to St. Matthew xviii., where the conversation in question is recorded, and we find there the following (verses 1-6): "At the same time came the disciples to Jesus, saying, who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? and Jesus called a little child unto Him, and sat him in the midst of them, and said, Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall

receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend (cause to sin) one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

Then notice verse 10: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." Conclude now with verse 14: "Even so, it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of those little ones should perish." To hunt other passages to prove that children are accepted by Christ would be superfluous; these abundantly prove it. If it should be suggested that the child in question may have been a babe, and, therefore, too young to either accept or reject Christ, whereas my argument is in favor of bringing children to Christ after they have reached the years of moral responsibility, I answer by referring again to St. Matthew xviii. 6,

in which the words "which believe in me" occur. I have no idea that this little child which "believed" in Christ knew the Apostles' Creed, or understood the doctrine of the Atonement, or could tell whether or not the Holy Ghost proceeds from both the Father and Son; but he accepted Christ, and this is all he could have done if he had already served a probation at sinning. But be this as it will, I plant myself upon the Scripture, and upon it I stand or fall.

Again, I call coming to Christ in childhood a more excellent way, because reason teaches that it is a thousand times easier, better and safer, for one to turn to the Lord in the days of youth (as Solomon puts it) before he learns the ways of sin; before sinful habits are formed; when there is really but little to give up; before he learns the fascination of worldly pleasure. A young person who enters into society without the restraining influences of Christianity may naturally enough be led astray. Besides the fact of a natural

evil inclination there are many objective evil influences to allure him. But the first and greatest reason I wish to give for insisting upon an early decision is that God requires it. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth" is the language of the Bible, and no Christian can afford to treat lightly, much less reject, anything that our Lord requires of mankind. No promise is given for the morrow, but to-day is the day to which our attention is called. Then, I beg to call attention to what I regard a very serious matter: there is a great deal of allowance made for persons who are out of the Church, especially if they are young. By a sort of common consent we give them great license, not seeming to remember that a disrespect for right-doing not only weakens the character of the person himself, but may also defile those with whom he associates. For instance, a Christian parent who is careful about the company of his daughter might see no good reason to object to the visits of a young man (provided he made no

profession of religion) who was a lover of the ballroom and of the theater, a moderate drinker and profane swearer, and even one who gambled a little occasionally when he went out to luncheon with a "few friends." A young man "of the world" might indulge in any or all of those habits, and yet rank as a first-class gentleman. But what if he professed Christianity and yet was addicted to such habits? He would be regarded as an unsafe person to have the love and confidence of a chaste young woman. Now all this is equivalent to saying that out of the Church a person may do many questionable things and yet not be questioned, while in the Church he will be expected, aye, required, to be upright in character.

I think it is but just to say that Christians in general do not indorse the things I have named, even when practiced by irreligious persons; but they say, "What can we do about it? He does not belong to Church, hence we cannot exercise any disciplinary authority over him." But since those vices are ruinous even to those who

may at first indulge in them but moderately, and since association begets assimilation, do not Christian parents and Christian people in general see the absolute, may I say awful, necessity of striving to keep those very young people within the restraining influences of the Church, to the end that those habits may never be formed? But yet another reason for making an early decision. Habits once formed may never be overcome. There is a story of a young man who was a family favorite. He was permitted, and especially by his over-indulgent mother, to have and to do anything his fancy desired. At last it became evident that he had entered fully and permanently upon a life of wretchedness and sin. All efforts to reform him proved futile. At last, in a drunken quarrel, he committed murder, for which crime he was tried, and sentenced to be hanged. During his confinement in the prison his almost heartbroken mother was permitted to visit him. When at length the time came for his execution, and she was

bidding him the last affectionate good-by, he beckoned her to hold her head close to his face as if he would whisper something to her. When she did so, he, like an angry beast, caught her ear between his teeth, and severed it from her head, saying, "This is to enable you to remember that it is your fault that I am here. When I was young I was left without restraint, and here is the awful result." The time-honored adage that an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure should be a daily text for all who in any way have the care of children.

Let the work of training begin in infancy; that is, let the parent or guardian make it a business to observe all the evil tendencies of the child and correct them. But more than this, let positive instruction upon the subject of religion be given, till the child is old enough to make a choice for himself. No age can be fixed upon as the period of moral responsibility for all children. Some have a better understanding at six than others at twelve years. I would suggest that we deal with the child somewhat after

the manner that Philip dealt with the Ethiopian. When he understood what Philip taught, he said, "Here is water; what hinders me from being baptized?" The answer was, "If thou believest, thou mayest." And so I say, when the child is ready to accept Christ as his Saviour, permit him to do so, no matter what his age. I desire to give one more reason for making an early decision. By entering upon a life of sin, both the physical and moral strength of the child may become destroyed. As to the physical, the body may by dissipation become so weakened, that even if the person were fortunate enough to reform and come in at the ninth or eleventh hour, he is in no condition to do the work of the Lord.

His best days have been wasted; he is now well-nigh a physical wreck. His strength and vigor are declining, and he now comes to offer to the Lord the remnant which he cannot even successfully use in the service of Satan. Then there is also the moral aspect. Granting that he is not a physical wreck, he has certainly to some

extent weakened his moral nature. He is like a broken dish that has been mended, but yet has the mark upon it. And more than this, it is possible that he has formed habits that are destined to be a stumbling-block to him through life. It is no easy matter for one who has gone a long time in any given way to undergo such a thorough and complete reformation as that no trace of the old life will, at any time or under any circumstances, show itself. I find every reason for becoming a Christian early in life, but can see no advantage whatever in delaying a decision. There is a greater risk in turning to the left for even a short space of time than there can be in the most feeble effort to turn to the right.

All that is required of one is a decision which involves two things; namely, an unconditional surrender of himself to Christ, and a complete acceptance of Him as his Saviour. Hunt out all the passages in the Bible which answer the question What must I do to be saved? and you will find that but three words are employed: those three

words occur at different places, and in slightly different relations. They are, Repent, Believe and be Baptized. Often "believe" occurs without any reference to the others, though they are logically included. Once (Acts ii. 38) the phrase is "Repent and be baptized;" but here also, I take it, faith is included, else obedience would not have been shown. The word "baptize" never stands alone as an answer to the question; so we may sum this up:

(a) Repentance (*μετανοια*), change of mind or of purpose; penitence implying sorrow for unbelief and sin, and a turning from them.

(b) Believe (*πιστευω*), to have faith; to put faith in; to trust; to confide. All this implies action, for an unwillingness to act upon faith is but to be faithless.

(c) Be baptized (*βαπτισω*), to administer the rite of baptism in the Triune name.

## CHAPTER III.

---

### MODE OF BAPTISM.

---

WHEN I began writing upon this subject I did not intend to discuss the mode of baptism, but in proceeding with the subject this phase of it naturally forces itself upon me. And as it may be of benefit to some of our younger members to know what the African Methodist Episcopal Church does teach concerning this matter, I think it will be well to take it up. First of all, I wish to call attention to the too frequent custom of saying that we christen our children as if we did not baptize them. In our Book of Discipline, page 209, chapter iii, under the head of Special Directions, the following occurs: Let every adult person and the parent of every child to be *baptized* have

their choice either of immersion, sprinkling or pouring. Notice, *baptized*, not christened, is the word employed. Then, on page 215, where the words used in baptism occur, we have the following: "N., I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Here again it is baptize, not christen. Webster's Dictionary interchanges the word christen with the word baptize. I do not object to this; on the contrary, I think him quite correct. But, as many may be misled by the use of the word christen, and use it to the exclusion of the word baptize, it would be best for us who believe in baptism to use the word that is less likely to mislead. A glance at the history and use of the word is in place here. The word belongs to the New Testament and is found in the Latin, Greek and English versions. First of all, let me say that we do not deny that immersion is baptism, but we affirm that baptism may be performed other than by immersion.

As there is nothing so good in polemics

as good authority, I shall here quote from the Greek Lexicon of Edward Robinson, D.D., of eighteenth century fame; a graduate of Hamilton College, New York, 1816; instructor of Hebrew at Andover, 1823; published an edition of the Iliad; went to Europe in 1826 and studied Hebrew under Gesenius at Halle, and history under Neander; was professor extraordinary at Andover of Biblical literature, 1830; translated Buttman's Greek Grammar, 1851; revised Newcome's Greek Harmony of the Gospels. In 1836 he published the Greek and English Lexicon from which I quote. Concerning the word βαπτισω, he says:

"1. To dip in, to sink, to immerse.

"2. To wash, to lave, to cleanse by washing; to wash one's self, *i. e.*, one's hands or body; to perform ablution.

"3. To baptize, to administer the rite of Baptism.

"*Note.* — While in Greek writers, from Plato onward, βαπτισω is everywhere to sink, to immerse, to overwhelm either wholly or partially, in Hellenistic usage, and espe-

cially in reference to the Rite of Baptism, it would seem to have expressed not always simply immersion, but the more general idea of ablution or affusion. This appears from the following consideration: (a) The circumstances named in St. Luke xi. 38, compared with those in St. Mark vii. 2-4, where *νίπτω* is employed, imply, according to Oriental custom, a pouring of water on the hands. See in *νίπτω* and 2 K. iii. 11; likewise the use of *βαπτισμός*, St. Mark vii. 4-8, as also passages from Septuagint.

“(b) In Acts ii. 41, three thousand are said to have been baptized at Jerusalem in one day, at the season of the Pentecost in June; and in Acts iv. 4 the same rite is necessarily implied in respect to five thousand more. Against the idea of full immersion in these cases there lies a difficulty, apparently insuperable, in the scarcity of water. There is in summer season no running stream in the vicinity of Jerusalem except the mere rill of Siloam, a few rods in length; and the city is and was

supplied with water from its cisterns and public reservoirs. (See Bibl. Res. in Palest., i, pp. 479-516.)

“From neither of these sources could a supply have been well obtained for the immersion of 8,000 persons. In the earliest Latin versions of the New Testament, as, for example, the Italia, which Augustine regarded as the best of all, and which goes back apparently to the second century and to usage connected with the Apostolic age, the Greek verb βαπτισω is uniformly given in the Latin from *baptizo*, and is never translated by *immergo* or any like word, showing that there was something in the rite of Baptism to which *immergo* did not correspond. (See Blanchini Evangeliarium quadruplex. ect. Rom., 1749.) The baptismal fonts still found among the ruins of the most ancient Greek churches in Palestine, as at Tekoa and Gophna, and going back apparently to very early times, are not large enough to admit of the baptism of adult persons by immersion, and were obviously never intended for that use.”—EDW. ROBINSON.

It seems useless to enter into a citation of facts that are at the command of any student of history to show that immersion was never the exclusive practice of the Christian Church or any branch of it for more than sixteen hundred years. How strange it would seem to indulge the belief that the Apostles, the immediate successors of our Lord, and the "Fathers," the immediate successors of the Apostles, and all Christendom, should lose the door of entrance into the Church, and for nearly two thousand years come in some other way without discovering their mistake! As Methodists, we are wont to lay more stress upon what the thing signifies than upon the mode of administering it. This idea of the subject is evidently in keeping with the teaching of John the Baptist, for he warned the Pharisees and Sadducees, when they came to his baptism, reminding them that they should bring forth fruits, meet for repentance; *i.e.*, show the reality of their repentance by forsaking their sins, and not to rely simply upon the ceremony; for,

said he: "I indeed baptize you with water (εἰς μετάνοιαν) into repentance." In Acts xix. 4, St. Paul calls the baptism of John a baptism of repentance (βαπτισμα, μετάνοιας). It was a public demonstration to the world that the person receiving it had renounced his sins and accepted Christ, and was therefore a proper subject to receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost. It is an act of obedience, an outward sign ordained of God, and to reject it is to disobey. But no undue stress should be laid upon the mere mode of administering it. The sacrament of baptism surely cannot be more sacred than that of the Holy Communion, and yet there is no controversy about the mode of administering this latter sacrament, although it is a fact, possibly a fact to be regretted, to say the least, that, in almost every religious sect, where the communion is given at all, it is by a slightly different mode. The thing agreed upon by all, however, is that bread and wine are the proper articles to use. In like manner should it be in baptism: let water be used in the

name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and, as no specific mode of administering is named in the Bible, let common sense and convenience dominate in settling this.

There are scores of circumstances under which it would be impossible to baptize by immersion—as in time of war. Men who are wounded and nigh unto death may surrender their hearts unto God and desire the Christian baptism, to be performed by the chaplain who is upon the spot for the purpose of administering to the spiritual wants of the soldiers—again, in cases of extreme illness, in which persons may desire baptism, but cannot be moved from their bed-chamber. The all-wise God, who ordained the sacrament and demanded its observance, did not say repent, believe and be immersed, knowing that there would be cases where immersion would be impossible; hence He used a generic term. Now, returning to the main subject, whatever may be said about children becoming Christians, or however little we may do to

encourage them, in spite of our negligence, there are children who are early drawn to the Christian life. It would seem harsh and unchristian-like to prohibit them. So, when they have given evidence of their sincerity, they are received on probation, just as older people are. Those who think it necessary to justify themselves for this action say "Well, after all, who can tell at what age the Lord may speak to children, even as He did to Samuel?"

But why not be logical and make this principle a guide for our actions in all cases?

There is nothing in the history of Samuel to warrant us in supposing that he was supernatural, and if there was, there have been scores and hundreds of similar cases both in ancient and modern times—not cases in which God spoke orally and literally to a child, as in the case of Samuel, but where He called them by His Spirit in early youth, and in which their lives have been consistently Christian from youth to age. I have now in my mind as many as

a half-dozen testimonies of this kind, and there may be hundreds of persons in possession of similar knowledge. This, I think, is sufficient to refute the supernatural idea.

Again, prominently in Biblical history is the case of Moses. Nothing is said descriptive of him in infancy, beyond the fact that he was a goodly child. He was placed in his mother's care, and by her nursed and trained till he could be weaned and taken to his foster-mother, the Egyptian Princess, by whom he was educated at the Royal Court in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Now, when we see him in after-life deliberately choosing the portion of a suffering and enslaved people, in spite of the kingly honors to which he was already heir, we at once agree with Blackwood that this fact was doubtless due to the early impressions made upon his plastic soul by his mother. But if, despite such abundant testimony to the contrary, some should still incline to call, at least, those Bible cases exceptional, then let us remember that the Bible abounds with evidence

that God's way of introducing great principles to mankind is by giving a solitary exhibition, and always but few at most. When He would show the exceeding sinfulness of sin to the antediluvians, He brought a flood upon the earth. But when He threw the bow upon the clouds as an evidence that there shall be no more flood while the world stands, it was not an evidence that sin should, at any time, be less grievous to Him. When He would teach a lesson upon the awful consequences of disrespect for the aged, He permitted bears to come up out of the earth and slay the children who insulted Elisha. When He would show the sacredness of the priesthood, He slew Nadab and Abihu for offering strange fire. When He would show the great crime of stealing, He permitted the whole army of Israel to suffer defeat till Achan was discovered and punished. So in like manner can we say that when He would show it to be possible for a very small child to hear and understand His voice, He spoke to Samuel, who,

in after-years, became the chief representative of God among His people. None of the above cases were ever repeated in precisely the same manner, but they set forth a great truth, which is as abiding as eternity.

Inconsistency—as between what we say and what we do—is often shown in another respect. For instance, when children give themselves very early to the Lord, so early that we are in doubt as to whether or not they fully understand what they are doing, when we take them into the Church we should, in keeping with our doubts, take extra precautions to have them nourished and trained until they become strong enough to resist evil. They are children, and they need milk ; they are weak, and need physical aid ; they are not skilled in spiritual warfare, hence they need to be guided and instructed to a greater degree than those of riper years. And herein lies a fatal mistake. We seem to have an idea that it is necessary for the child to wait till it is far enough advanced in knowledge to understand the

plan of salvation before it attempts to be a Christian. We seem to lose sight of the idea of Christian nurture. Special pains should be taken with those who are inexperienced to train them up into right ideas of Christian character. That is why the Church has been so careful to provide for special work in this direction, as I have elsewhere pointed out. With the wisest and most experienced Christians, Christian character is a thing of growth, and the sooner it is begun the better it is for the Christian himself. •

In the family circle our children are constantly doing things peculiar to childhood that would be inexcusable in older persons; but we do not think of saying that they are irredeemably lost as to good behavior, and so we continue the work of correcting and instructing. In like manner should we treat them in the spiritual household, the Church. When we discover mistakes that they have made owing to their inexperience and their childlike thoughtlessness, we should not begin to

say, "Yes, I knew you had no religion, you are a pretty Christian;" but, like true Christian guardians, we should all the more instruct them and watch over them in love. If wrong-doing after conversion is to be taken as an evidence that the conversion was not genuine, then may we all hide our faces and flee from the presence of the Lord.

Finally, duty is ours, and consequences belong to the Lord.

As in the Jewish Church children were included in the covenant under the law, and as in the Christian Church they are also included in the covenant of grace, and as both reason and experience justify the wisdom of such a course, let us as Christians lose no time, spare no endeavor to lead the little ones in their youth to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.

Now, in answer to the question What relation do baptized children sustain to the Church? they are inseparably a part of it. In a word, they sustain the same relation-

to the Church as such, that they sustain to the family as such. No one ever thinks of regarding small children as being other than legitimate members of the household, or of giving them an inferior place therein. To the contrary, they are accorded all the rights and privileges of older members, according to their ability to appropriate them. And in case of making a will, all the children are remembered, no matter what their age. Guardians are appointed for such as are under age; to see that no advantage is taken of them, and that they are not deprived of their legal share of the inheritance. And so with children of the Church. They are a part of the household of God, and no one has a right to dispossess them. Christ, and not the Church, made the provision for them, and all Church legislation against them is illegal and unchristian. The exercise of guardianship over them, till they can act for themselves, is not discretionary with their parents and the Church, but it is a sacred obligation. If they are ever disinherited, they must do

it themselves. They are a part and parcel of the Church which Christ purchased with His own blood, and will so remain till, by their own will, they make choice of another lot. This general definition will apply to all children whether baptized or not; but children baptized in a particular Church are ceremonially made members of that Church, and should be so regarded and so treated.

## CHAPTER IV.

---

### CONDITION AND MODE OF RECEIVING CHILDREN INTO FULL MEMBERSHIP.

---

ONE of the objections frequently made to infant Baptism, and also to childhood Christianity, is that our Lord says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." The argument based upon these words of our Lord is this: children cannot believe; therefore, they cannot comply with the above condition. Any one who has studied child-nature, child-disposition, with any degree of accuracy, will discover the weakness of this position. If there is any one thing a child can do, it is to believe—yes, to confide in. The belief of a child amounts to faith, sure enough. It not only believes, but it trusts; and that is what adults so often fail to do. Perhaps

this, more than anything else, is what our Lord means when He says, "Except ye be converted and become as a little child"—not as a child in understanding, but as a child in simple faith—a faith that does not even question His word. Majority of years and maturity of judgment often produce a state of mind that does not aid one in the attainment of that faith which asks no questions. Just at this point, the agnostic and the Christian part company. The agnostic takes the position that it is wrong for a man to say that he is certain of the objective truth of any proposition, unless he can produce evidence which logically justifies that certainty; the Christian takes the ground that there are propositions which should be accepted as worthy of belief, without logically satisfactory evidence such as the agnostic demands; that revelation is above reason, and in it will be found many things that cannot be understood by the finite, yet must be accepted in order to please God. I think I have fairly stated the points of issue between the Christian and the agnos-

tic. It is as important for the Christian to be consistent as it is for others, and, like others, they weaken their case to the extent that they are inconsistent. I suppose it would be difficult to find any one who will deny that there are things in the Christian code which cannot be understood even by mature minds ; and yet, this failure to understand certain things does not disqualify one for membership in the Christian Church. Things being thus, why should it be regarded as intolerable for a child to be granted Christian privileges in the Church, simply because he cannot give a scientific answer to the question what is faith? Should we, as Christians, bind upon our children burdens which we acknowledge we cannot bear? The danger of becoming so critical and skeptical as not to believe anything for which a scientific reason cannot be given is the danger of every age, and may we not say especially of the present age?

If we, as Christians, really believe that the Bible is true, there certainly can be no

objection to inducing our children to accept its teachings, even before they can give a good reason why. But there are also other important considerations; though children may be kept out of church their minds are not kept blank upon other matters. There is always something to occupy them. If good impressions are not made, surely bad ones will be. Their characters are being formed, and will take this or that shape, according to their surroundings. But why multiply words? If Christians believe that the Bible offers the only *way* of salvation, it is their indispensable duty to do all that is in their power to have their children begin life in that only true way.

We are constantly confronted with the argument that children cannot be trained into Christianity; that to hold this doctrine is to oppose conversion. Do persons who hold this position forget that the very word of God upon which they base their argument says, "Train up a child when it is young in the way that you would have it go?" This very word "*train*," so fre-

quently and persistently objected to by those who oppose childhood Christianity, is the very word that is employed by the wise man, and is indeed a significant word. It is not simply to teach. Precept might be given till it became monotonous. Nor is it simply the time-honored custom of having him say prayers before going to bed ; but it is to “*train*.” It may, however, be suggestive to the reader to call attention in this connection to the difference between the words *teach* and *train*. *Teach*: to show ; to impart the knowledge of ; to give intelligence concerning ; to impart, as knowledge before unknown, or as rules for practice ; to inculcate as true or important ; to exhibit impressively ; to tell. Other kindred meanings belong to this word, but they are all in the line of “*giving instruction*.” *Train*: to draw along ; to trail ; to draw by persuasion, artifice and the like ; to entice ; to teach and form by practice ; to exercise ; to discipline ; as, to train soldiers to the use of arms ; to break, tame and accustom to draw, as oxen. It can be

seen at a glance that the important difference between those words is in the one—to teach—an announcement is made ; not necessarily more than this ; while in the other—to train—the person addressed is put into action, and actually drilled. Now, study the word in its Scriptural relation, and it will be found to imply not simply Christian instruction, but Christian practice.

In discussing a question so important as this—a question which involves the salvation of souls—much care should be had in stating positions and in interpreting statements. If we are understood to be introducing a new doctrine—a doctrine that means to do away with conversion and regeneration—then we are greatly misunderstood. The position we do take is this : the Bible does not teach, either directly or by inference, that a probationary period of willful sinning must necessarily precede regeneration ; or, to put it in other words, the Bible does not teach that an individual must reach the years of maturity and enter from choice upon a life of sin in order to

give "regeneration" something to act upon. If it is claimed that we draw the lines too closely when we expect a child to pass from moral irresponsibility to moral responsibility, without committing an actual sin, we admit that this may be true, and, as a matter of fact, this is not our position. This brief space—if we may so put it—between the time that moral responsibility is reached and an active Christian life is entered upon, together with the "sinful nature" of the child, affords abundant opportunity for regeneration. The position we take is this: it is possible to so train a child in the ways of right living that, when the period of moral responsibility is reached, he will readily, and from choice, make choice of a Christian life, and so practically avoid joining himself to the world to live a life of sin. But however this may be, we claim that it is the indispensable duty of the Christian parent and the Christian Church to labor to this end; if, despite these efforts, the child goes astray, his blood be upon his own head.

Concerning conversion it is well to distinguish between this and regeneration. Conversion may be called a purely mental process, and is possible only for persons who have a normal intellect. We never talk to idiots about being converted; we leave their case entirely to Christ and the Atonement. But we do talk of conversion to persons to whose understanding and reason we can appeal. We ask them to consider the matter for themselves. We persuade them to accept Christ, and we hold them responsible for failing to do so; if it were something which they could not do, they could not consistently be held responsible. This preparatory work is what is meant by conversion; it is a change of desire, of purpose, of life. Quite different is the work of regeneration. This divine mystery, this process which makes one a "new creation," belongs entirely to God's part of the contract, and is never done without the consent of the individual for whom it is done. It is our duty to lead the children up to the point of making the

choice; and when this they do, God will as readily perform the work of grace in their hearts as He would had they first entered upon an active life of sin, and afterward turned to Him. Now you see, dear reader, that we agree perfectly concerning the spiritual work which must be done for every one who is made a fit subject for the kingdom of heaven; but I do not, and never shall grant, that this spiritual work can better be done if the devil is given a hand in it.

Many children come to the years of moral responsibility with a decided leaning toward Christianity, but are finally led astray for the want of proper encouragement or definite guidance at this critical and important period. However carefully children have been trained in morals and religion, they are not Church members practically until they have been regularly inducted into the Church. Up to this point the parent or guardian has been largely, indeed chiefly, the responsible person; but now the chief responsibility must be placed

upon the child himself. The Church, in its organized capacity, affords the needed opportunity for placing definite responsibilities upon an individual. A person may have known the Scriptures from childhood, like Timothy, but a Paul is needed to lead him into the work ; or, like the rich young ruler, he may be able to say, "All these things have I kept from my youth up," and still he may lack that which is necessary to the perfecting of a Christian life. The young ruler was all right as to morals, and this constituted a large portion of Christian practice ; but when he was brought, for the first time, face to face with the personal Christ, he was astonished to learn that with such a stock on hand he should yet fall so far short of being a perfect Christian.

There must be a period in Christian experience when a personal and conscious consecration is made. This consecration must have in it the condition of willing obedience. Much of the goodness of a child who is brought up virtuously is nega-

tive goodness; that is to say, the child is not good from having made an intelligent choice of goodness, but from having never been brought into contact with evil in a sense that would oblige him to make the choice between good and evil. The moral condition and the religious tendency of a child, up to a certain period, are more the result of restraint and direction from others than of a personal choice of his own. And thus it follows that however correct in morals the child finds himself when he reaches the years of accountability, he must then make choice of what his future life shall be. The life previous to this period has been according to the decision of another; but henceforth it must be according to the decision of himself. With all the weight of influence on the side of right, it will be comparatively easy to secure a decision on this side; but unless the claim is forced, and a decision demanded at the proper time, all the benefits of previous training may be lost. It is, therefore, of the greatest importance that the Christian

Church should provide a means, an ordinance, by which her children shall be given an opportunity to say whether or not they will voluntarily assume the obligations that were taken for them by their parents or sponsors.

Such a provision is as necessary as the work of early training. Indeed, unless this early training is a means which looks forward to a definite end, it matters but little whether or not it is performed. Just what this service or ordinance shall be called is not of vital importance. But in order to be definite, and to avoid placing the responsibility upon another, I would suggest that the A. M. E. Church adopt the confirmation service of the Protestant Episcopal Church as the best and most authoritative means of inducting our children into the Church, after the proper preparation has been made, both by their parents and by themselves.

It may be well to give some reasons why I suggest the adoption of this particular system, which reasons I shall give as follows :

1. Because the Scriptures teach it, and it was practiced by the apostles. Concerning the two sacraments, viz., Baptism and the Lord's Supper, we have a definite command; concerning Confirmation, we have not a command in so many words from the Lord; but the very same is true of the consecration of bishops, the ordination of priests and deacons, and the rite of Christian marriage; yet who among us would for a moment question the propriety of any of these?

The Scriptures tell us that during the forty days of our Lord on earth, after the resurrection, He spoke to the apostles concerning things pertaining to the kingdom of God. He had already promised them that when the Comforter came He would bring to their remembrance all things whatsoever He had commanded them. Now, after the ascension, the apostles waited at Jerusalem till the Holy Ghost came down upon them, and immediately thereafter they began their work. As many as professed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ were baptized and received into the Church.

The people of Samaria accepted the Gospel preached to them by Philip, the deacon, and were baptized, which, when the apostles at Jerusalem heard, they sent Peter and John, who went and laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost (Acts viii. 14-17).

When our Lord took the little children in His arms, He laid His hands upon them and blessed them. No doubt this was a foreshadowing of one of the ceremonies of the Church which He was to establish on the day of Pentecost, for thereafter we find the apostles ministering this rite to the newly-baptized converts.

When Paul visited Ephesus he found there certain disciples, and he asked if they received the Holy Ghost when they became believers. It was equivalent to asking them if they had been received into the communion of the Church. Finding that they had not received Christian baptism at all, he first baptized them, and then laid his hands on them.

In Hebrews, vi. 1, 2, we find an enumera-

tion of the "*first principles*"—*τοῦ τῆς ἀρκῆς τοῦ χριστοῦ λόγον* — and among those first principles here named is the laying on of hands. Bishop Hall, in his "Chirothesis," says: "Dare any Christian to presume to say that the apostle, the great and wise master-builder, mistook the foundation whereon he builded? or dare any presumptuous soul single this one article from the rest as merely temporary, when all the rest are granted to be of eternal use?"

2. It was the practice of the primitive Church.

Tertullian says: "After coming out from the bath we are anointed with sacred unction; then the hand is laid upon us for the benediction."

Referring to the Samaritans who were confirmed by St. Peter and St. John, St. Cyprian says, "Which is also now our custom."

Firmilliam of Cesarea speaks of baptizing, laying on of hands and ordination.

Theodoret, commenting on Hebrews, vi. 2, says: "Those who believe come to

Divine Baptism, and by the sacerdotal hand receive the grace of the Spirit."

The dates to which these references belong are from 192 to 450. So much for primitive custom.

3. The Greek, the Roman, the Anglican, the German Reformed and the Lutheran Churches have always practiced it, and now practice it. These churches represent a communion of four hundred million souls, and what church historian upon the face of the earth can pronounce them unchristian or their orders and rites invalid?

4. I advocate it because we have not substituted anything in its place, and it is, to say the least, a very dangerous thing to allow our children and young people to pass from the Church into the world without even an attempt in any kind of systematic way to retain them in the Church.

To recapitulate: I recommend confirmation—

(a) Because the Scripture teaches it, and the apostles practiced it.

(b) Because the primitive Church held to it.

(c) Because the Greek, Roman, Anglican, German Reformed and Lutheran Churches have always had it.

(d) Because we need it, or something in its place, and we have neither.

When the child has been brought into the fold, then let it be properly nurtured, and gently and wisely led along, till it is able to stand alone, and take its part in the manifold duties that are incumbent upon a Christian life.

## ADDENDA.

---

**A**S the principal part of the work of preparing children for a Christian life, so far as the Church is concerned, is done in the Sunday-school, I think it advisable to append a few thoughts concerning this important department of church work.

### ORIGIN.

THE earliest record that we have seen upon the Sabbath-school subject dates as far back as the sixteenth century, and is placed to the credit of Saint Charles Borromeo. Another record is made a hundred years later of the efforts of Rev. Joseph Alleine, of Taunton, to gather children together on the Lord's day for instruction. Then, subsequent to those dates, mention is made of several persons visiting, clothing and instructing the children of the poor,

selecting the Sabbath as the most propitious time for the work.

But it was not till the period of 1778-1783 that the effort was so organized as to become a distinct department of Christian work, and be lifted from local obscurity to national repute. Robert Raikes, who gave this impetus to the Sunday-school idea, bears, as he well deserves, the honored name of founder. He was an Englishman by birth and education ; born in Gloucester, England, on the 14th day of September, 1735. Mr. Raikes was a man eminently fitted for the exalted position of leader in this new field of Christian work ; a man of great business ability, honest and charitable, public-spirited and philanthropic. His charity was first shown to the world by his attention to the poor and imprisoned of his district. When I was "naked ye clothed me : sick and in prison ye visited me."

Engaged in this work of love the founder was impressed with the great need of an organized and well regulated means of reaching the youth in time to save them

from sin and ruin, from poverty and disgrace. On the 3d day of November, 1783, Mr. Raikes published in his paper, *The Gloucester Journal*, and gave to the world for the first time his idea of the Sunday-school System. The work was of God; and though, like the grain of mustard-seed, small at first, yet, like the cedar of Lebanon, it has grown, spreading its branches outward and upward, growing in power and influence with each century, period and decade, and will continue to grow till the world is filled with its sanctifying influences, and heaven made to re-echo with its songs of praise.

## DESIGN.

THERE are different kinds of knowledge to be obtained in this world. Man himself, the heavens above, the earth beneath, the world of waters and all that they contain are exhaustless storehouses of truth, wonder and beauty. The study of these subjects is useful and honorable, and they should not be neglected; but the study of

God Himself, as revealed in His word, and our relations to Him, is first in the order of importance and should be made first in order of time. This knowledge is as much higher than earthly knowledge as the heavens are higher than the earth, and as much more important as the soul is more important than the body. Listen: "Thus saith the Lord, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." It is the work of the Sunday-school to study those subjects which do not begin and end with this world, but which reach beyond time into eternity.

Without a knowledge of God, man is like a ship at sea without a compass or rudder. Amid the storms of earthly passion, and the whirl of temptation, his precious soul may, at any moment, be dashed to pieces.

The Sabbath-school labors to lay a moral foundation, broad and wide ; while its doors are open to all ages, from the child of three summers to the hoary head, it deals especially with the young, realizing the fact that prevention is better than cure. Untruthfulness, dishonesty, impurity, intemperance and other vices are lying in wait to seize upon the souls of our innocent ones ; hence they must be guarded by parental vigilance and religious instruction.

Children, from their very innocence and inexperience, are apt to fall into snares ; hence childhood is the age to watch with the greatest vigilance. It is a saying, as true as it is old, that "as the twig is bent, the tree is inclined."

Would we have our children form healthy moral habits, we must begin the work of training when the character can be easily impressed with truth.

But where should this work be done ? The proper place for it to begin is in the family circle. But shall not the Church supplement the work of the home, since it

requires the combined effort of the Christian home and Christian Church to counteract the inducements offered by the world to lead the young astray? Moreover, parents often for want of time are unable to give the necessary attention to this work; nor have they always the facilities for training the youthful mind. Many parents have not the ability to teach the mysterious truths of the Bible like those who make it their especial work. Again, we must remember how many children there are whose parents are not Christians, and who, consequently, cannot feel the serious responsibility which rests upon them to lead their little ones early to Christ.

O Christians ! it is our sacred duty to see that these children are led into the fold of Christ. The Sabbath-school is to them their only church ; indeed, the Sabbath-school *is* the children's church. There they are taught to read the Bible, to sing and pray ; thus they often become a means of grace to their unconverted parents ; for where the lamb goes the old sheep is sure

to follow. The Sabbath-school undertakes to do this work in preference to the church proper, because the regular pulpit service, the prayer and experience meetings are not adapted to the child's limited understanding.

We take our children to the church; this is right; for by so doing, they learn to love and respect the place, and they are impressed with the order and solemnity of the sanctuary; but they cannot take part in the services as in the Sabbath-school, where everything is brought down to their comprehension.

Much has been said concerning the age at which children become accountable for their acts. Some say at seven years, others say at twelve. I don't believe that any age can be settled upon that would apply to all children. Some know more at seven years than others do at twelve. The fact is this: it is our duty to begin the work of spiritual training as soon as the child can understand what it is that you are teaching; when it is old enough to learn the names

of persons and places, it is old enough to learn the name of Jesus.

I knew a young girl of eleven years who died from our Sabbath-school. She had never made profession of religion ; but she had been taught to love Jesus, and that He loved her. So, in her death's sickness, though but a child, she believed on the Saviour with faith unfeigned, and calmly gave up her life to Him whom she had been taught to love ; and, instead of leaving her parents in heaviness and doubt, she gave them the blessed assurance that she enjoyed great peace. I knew another who, at the age of seven years, visited me, as her pastor, at a time when I was sick in bed. She bowed at my bedside, and, with the simplicity of a child, asked the Lord in her prayer to make me well. There are many persons living to-day, advanced in years, holy in life and ripe in Christian experience, who date their conversion from childhood.

We all know that evil, like weeds, comes voluntarily ; while good, like grain, must

be sown and cultivated. So the Sabbath-school proposes to sow the seed of righteousness early, that it may have fair play in the child's character before it is irredeemably overgrown and poisoned by the weeds of sin. There are two ways of keeping a field clear of weeds—one by pulling them up, and the other by sowing grain in the field.

For such work “the harvest truly is plenteous and the laborers few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He may send forth laborers into His harvest.”

### THE DUTY AND QUALIFICATIONS OF SUNDAY-SCHOOL SUPERINTEND- ENTS AND TEACHERS.

WHAT is a Sunday-school?

It is a school held upon the Sabbath-day, for the study of the Bible and for moral and religious instruction. Its pupils may be young, middle-aged, or old, but it is intended especially for the training of the young. A Christian Sabbath-school is one that teaches the doctrines of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as given in the Bible.

What should be the duty and qualifications of those who teach and of those who superintend such a school?

*I. The Teacher.*

He should be a Christian, not nominally, not theoretically, but one who has experienced a change of heart (St. John iii. 3). For only such a person can properly appreciate the infinite importance of the truths which he is teaching. As a Christian, he must be pious and consistent; as an officer, prompt and reliable; as a man, kind and lovable. He should possess a fair amount of acquired ability and should be a good reader. To read the Bible correctly is the first step toward teaching it, and to understand the subject to be taught is a necessity for all successful teachers. But to read the Bible correctly is not only to pronounce the words as they should be, and to give proper attention to emphasis and inflections, but it is to read with that deep and serious sense of what the words mean, which may be called reading with the spirit

and with the understanding. It is very important also that the teacher should have the gift of imparting his knowledge to others. Many learned persons have failed as teachers because they did not possess this talent.

We deem the foregoing qualifications necessary for a Sabbath-school teacher, because his work is not temporal, but spiritual; therefore, secular knowledge alone will not fit him for this work. Again, child-nature is tender and plastic, and children are imitative, especially of their teachers and of those who are their guides; hence the character and influence of the teachers should be such as will reach the hearts of their pupils and will impress them for good. An irreligious and worldly-minded teacher would doubtless have as much influence upon his pupils as would the most careful Christian; but how different would this influence be! Not more different are the effects of light and darkness. Childhood is the time when lasting impressions are made; when habits

are formed which, in all probability, will follow the child through life, controlling, correcting and lifting him up, or enslaving, debasing and dragging him down ; therefore too much care cannot be exercised with respect to a child's early religious teachings.

Like a pastor, the Sabbath-school teacher should know somewhat of the daily life and home surroundings of his pupils ; where they live, how they live, and what manner of company they keep. The work of one day, the Sabbath, may prove quite insufficient to counterbalance the doings and influences of six days.

The failure of good impressions, as well as the absence of conversions, may often be traced to the counteracting influences of the child's everyday surroundings. Therefore, the Sabbath-school teacher should, as nearly as it is possible, keep in sight of his class, that he may exert a constant influence over his children.

*II. The Superintendent.*

He should possess all the qualifications of a first-class teacher, and more; for the superintendent is a teacher promoted, just as a general is a promoted soldier, or a soldier of higher official rank. He must be a competent teacher, because he is to have charge of the weekly teachers' meetings, and must be able to instruct his teachers, whenever it is necessary, in the lessons which they are to impart. To understand and to explain the Holy Scriptures, we must understand Bible History, also its geography and biography. In all of these the superintendent must be well informed in order that he may not only train his teachers and arrange their work, but that he may interest them and inspire them in the truths which they are to teach.

He must be a good governor. "Order is heaven's first law," says Pope; and it is the first law of every well-regulated Sabbath-school. Certainly nothing could be more damaging to a school than a want of system, or confusion and division, and

nothing more sure to defeat its objects. The superintendent, at the head of his board of officers and teachers, must see that all are working together in harmony for the common welfare of the school. To do this is often a difficult task, and it will require all the tact and governing ability of the superintendent to secure it. He should possess originality. However much general knowledge of his work he may have, there will often be need of measures to meet certain conditions of his individual school; those needs he must be able to see quickly, and equally as quickly must he be able to invent and formulate means to meet them.

In carrying out his original plans, as well as in managing the routine work of the school, the superintendent will fail unless he is a man of good executive ability. A man may succeed admirably in forming a mind-picture, and yet be unable to develop his ideas and reduce them to practice.

The good judgment of the superintendent will so often be in demand that it is

difficult to find the place where it is not needed. In selecting and situating his teachers the best of judgment will be required. A teacher who might be a perfect success with a Bible class may utterly fail in the infant department; hence, as the success of the school depends largely upon the fitness of the teachers for their respective positions, much care should be had in their selection and appointment.

The superintendent must not be skeptical. The Christian Sabbath-school must be headed by, and imbued with, the spirit of one who is sound in orthodox theology. If the Sabbath-school does its work well, it will send out its pupils with settled convictions of truth; and if that truth be error, great is the error. In the selection of Sabbath-school helps and libraries the superintendent should see that nothing unfit is used.

How many young people have been led astray and their future usefulness destroyed by reading sensational stories and books of fiction! We must place in our libraries

books on solid and practical subjects for our young men and women, and picture-books with stories of the honest and truthful lives of many who have walked the earth and have now passed to their reward. Have a competent librarian who will take proper care of the books, and see that they are not lost. When they become worn out or lose pages, lay them aside to be rebound, or fill their places with others.

Supply the school with maps on the Bible lands ; with blackboards ; with Bible dictionaries and reference books for the use of teachers. Have spelling books for persons who are willing to come to school, but cannot read. Persons who are too old to attend the day-schools should be put into a class by themselves and given a faithful teacher.

Next, we want music—instrumental and vocal. Music has its charms for both old and young. It has often been a question in my mind by what means the more people were led to Christ, by the preaching of Moody or by the singing of Sankey. Sing-

ing is attractive: first, because it is a sign of good humor; we seldom, if ever, feel like singing if we are angry; but the angry heart is often made glad by sweet music, as in the case of Saul and David. To hear a multitude of infant voices lifted up to heaven, chanting the praises of God, is like an angelic choir.

To furnish a school with the necessary appliances will cost something; but if you would have a profitable school you must spend something. Every school is not able to secure at once all that is necessary to a perfect outfit; but no school should be afraid to spend money so as to come as near to it as possible.

The supplies must be abundant, varied, of the best kind and frequently renewed; therefore the superintendent must be a good financier, for he must know how to raise money and how to spend it to the best advantage. If the money management is not good the school will become bankrupt.

Loyalty to one's church is a quality of no little importance to a superintendent;

he is molding the future Church ; and if he himself loves and respects the laws and government of the church of his choice, those who are being trained at his hand will partake of his spirit, and this will fit them for their future responsibilities. There must be no discord between the Church and Sabbath-school ; their relation is that of mother and daughter ; and to insure harmony between them, loyal persons must fill all important posts.

Now the thoughtful reader, as he peruses these pages, may exclaim, " O ! that I were such a teacher, or such a superintendent ! " Why not become such ? Are you a Christian ? If not, " Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. " But another may say, " I have long since become a Christian, but have had no educational advantages ; so I find it very difficult to interest and impress my pupils as I should like to do. " To such an one I say, look about you, treasure your spare moments, seize every opportunity of improvement,

and you will soon be astonished at your own progress. Elihu Burritt, the Connecticut blacksmith, who became an eminent scholar and the master of fifty languages, is an illustrious example of what a person may accomplish by his own unaided efforts.

In this enlightened and progressive age, when books, newspapers, magazines and educational helps of every kind, both secular and religious, can be had almost for the asking, no one need be ignorant. Take any great painter or sculptor who has risen to eminence, like Michael Angelo, and consider how much pains and labor were required before he could express upon canvas or in marble the ideal of his mind; and surely the Sabbath-school teacher, who labors upon the imperishable material of an immortal soul, should think no sacrifice too great, no toil too laborious, to develop all its grace and beauty. O! that the enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit may direct our teachings and bless our work!

## HOW TO MAKE ROOM FOR IT.

ONE of the barriers to successful Sabbath-school work is the want of time to do it in. In Sabbath-school gatherings we have often heard this spoken of as "one of our discouragements." In conversation with individuals who are interested in the work of training the young we have heard the same complaint. The cause is not that any church or pastor—so far as we have been able to learn—is opposed to the work of the Sabbath-school, but that many are unwilling to give *entirely* one of the three regular church services, and let the time be used exclusively for Sabbath-school work. The prevailing custom has been the preaching of three sermons on Sabbath, viz., morning, afternoon and night, with a brief session of Sabbath-school interjected somewhere between the regular services. Now, the friends of the Sabbath-school cause come asking for the time of one of those services, and as the best time to gather the children, select the afternoon.

Should the request be granted? It should, provided it can be shown that by doing so more good for the cause of Christianity can be accomplished. Which, then, is the more productive of intelligent and practical Christians—the preaching of three sermons every Sabbath, or the preaching of the Gospel morning and night, and devoting the afternoon of every Sabbath to Bible classes for the old and the young to *study* the word of God by system?

1. *The Negative.*—Concerning the preaching of three sermons every Sabbath, it has been said by wise and experienced theologians that a man cannot prepare and deliver that number in such a manner as to properly instruct and edify his hearers. If this be true, then it follows that in such a case the sermons would come short in their first and most important objects. Then, to establish a three sermon system offers a temptation rarely overcome—to place incompetent persons in the pulpit. In either of the foregoing cases there is

danger of reducing the service of preaching to a mere formality.

When the pulpit is not effectual in awakening sinners and enlightening and strengthening Christians, it loses its power for good. Again, granting that the people could be furnished with three well-prepared sermons each Sabbath, the valid objection follows that so much matter could not be digested in a day. There is a striking analogy between the way the body is fed and the way the mind is nourished. However good our food may be, we are limited to a certain quantity of it. Overload the stomach, and the process of digestion goes on with difficulty, or perhaps stops altogether; then death ensues. So it is with the mind. Crowd it with thought from morning till night, and instead of its being digested, assimilated and changed into the very blood of spiritual life, it simply lies in a confused and inactive mass in the mind. Therefore people are not made better according to the number of sermons that they hear, but they are benefited by words

which, having been understood and reflected upon, enter into their lives, and shape and control their whole character.

2. *The Affirmative.*—The second proposition is, a sermon morning and night, and the afternoon service consecrated to Bible classes in which both the old and the young may engage in the study of the Holy Scriptures. In this service an opportunity is given for mutual benefit ; all may read ; each may give his views upon the passage read ; one may profit by the views of another, and all may be benefited by the views of the teacher. Then, this being the only service for the afternoon, an hour can be fixed upon when the congregation will have had sufficient time to attend to home duties after the morning service before being called to attend that of the afternoon.

Whenever two services are held upon the afternoon of the same day, as preaching and Sabbath-school, one is sure to infringe upon the time of the other ; else, if they are held simultaneously in separate

rooms, those who attend one cannot attend the other; hence the interest is divided, and both services weakened thereby. Then the study of the Bible is of inestimable value to Christian growth. Therein alone are found the law, the testimony, the statutes and the commandments of the Lord; therein alone is found the lamp to our feet, and the light to our path; therein alone is found that wisdom which is more to be desired than gold—yea, than much fine gold.

While nature makes her contribution of information concerning the existence of a God, revelation tells us what His will concerning us is. Probably the Bible is regularly or systematically read in but few families for want of time, inclination or ability. It is therefore the duty of the Church to supply this need. That which made the Bereans in point of intelligence and proficiency in the advance of other Christians of their day was, they not only listened to and accepted the preaching of the apostles, but they searched the Scriptures daily to see whether the things preached were true. The

study of the Scriptures by the young is especially necessary. The development of the Church in active Christian work, and the final salvation of the human family from sin, is not so much dependent upon *reformation* as it is upon *formation*. We recognize in a human being three natures, viz., physical, intellectual and spiritual; and the happiness and usefulness of the individual will be in proportion to the harmonious development of all three of these powers. Neither the intellectual culture of the Greeks nor the physical prowess of the Romans prevented those nations from falling into vices which finally brought about their decline and fall. "We may measure the growth and the decline of a people by the purity or corruption of their morals." Nothing less than the grace of God can keep a man or a nation from becoming a castaway. But in spite of the fact that the importance of moral training is brought home to us by the accumulated history of all past ages, as well as by the everyday occurrences of the present time,

we are still unwilling to devote one-fiftieth part of the time to the moral and religious training of our children that we do to their secular education ; for we keep our children in the day-school six hours each day for five days in the week, and send them to Sabbath-school once a week for two hours. At the end of a school year the child has had twelve hundred hours in day-school and eighty hours in the Sabbath-school. Yet we seem astonished when we see our young people going astray, as if we had not known that mere secular learning could not teach them to avoid evil, or give them the power to resist temptation. Said the great Apostle Paul, who was brought up at the feet of that master teacher, Gamaliel, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord." It is this saving knowledge which the Church is under sacred obligations to give her children. If she neglects to lead them to God, Satan will not neglect to lead them away. There is no hope that this work

will be done in the secular school, for the Church wisely and properly assumes the duty herself. In some schools even the reading of the Bible is forbidden in order to avoid sectarianism. The Sabbath-school is not, therefore, a place where persons come simply to be entertained or amused ; it is a school whose high purpose is to train souls for heaven. Here the teaching is of sufficiently high grade to interest and instruct the most advanced Bible student, and is also brought down to the comprehension of the youngest pupils ; and thus those little ones do not have to be brought into the Church in after years, for they were never out of it ; they grew up in it.

It has been well said that habit, at first a thread of silk, finally becomes a band of steel ; hence the Church owes it to her own perpetuity to train her children early in habits of right thinking and right doing, that they may go forth to take their places in the Church, in society and in the nation with enlightened consciences, firm principles and unwavering faith in God ; for the

glory of the Church, the highest welfare of society and the perpetuity of republican institutions must, in the end, depend upon the moral and religious character of the men who form them. Therefore, if the plan of two sermons, one in the morning, the other at night, with the afternoon devoted to the study of the Bible, were generally adopted, and pains taken to make such service what it ought to be, I believe that the result would be a growth in religious knowledge, an advance in Christian activity and a revival of Scriptural holiness.

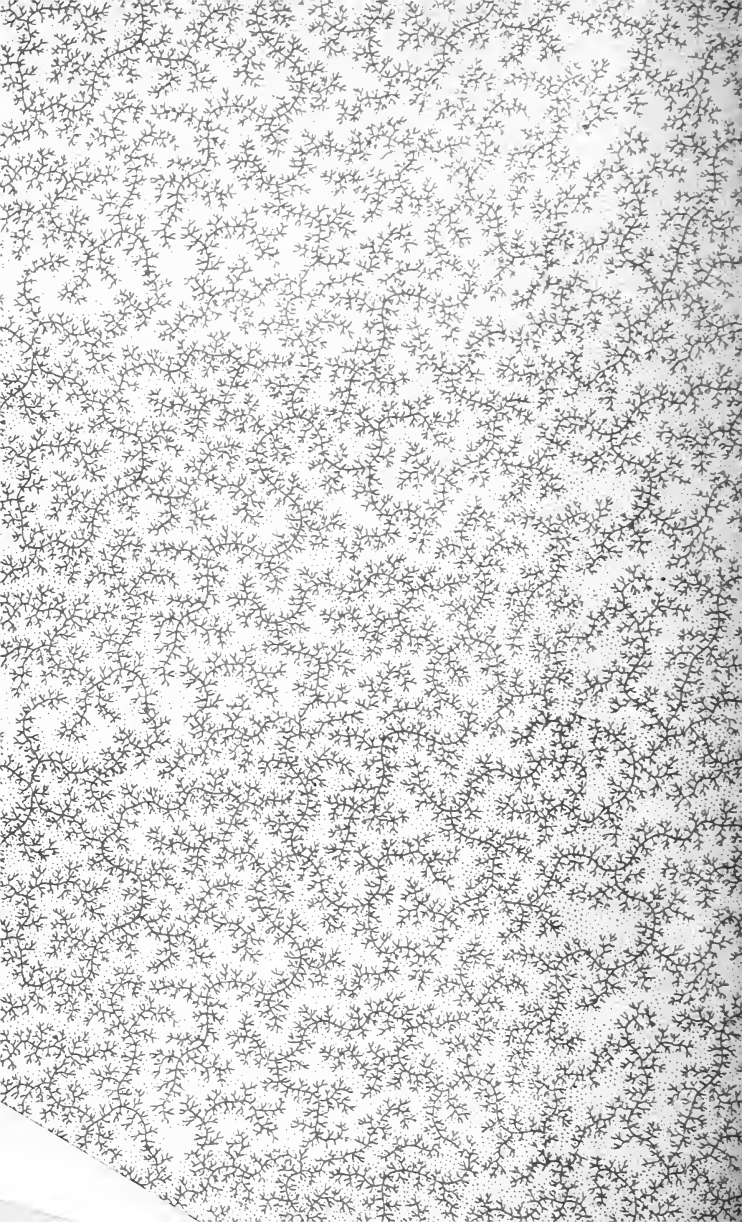


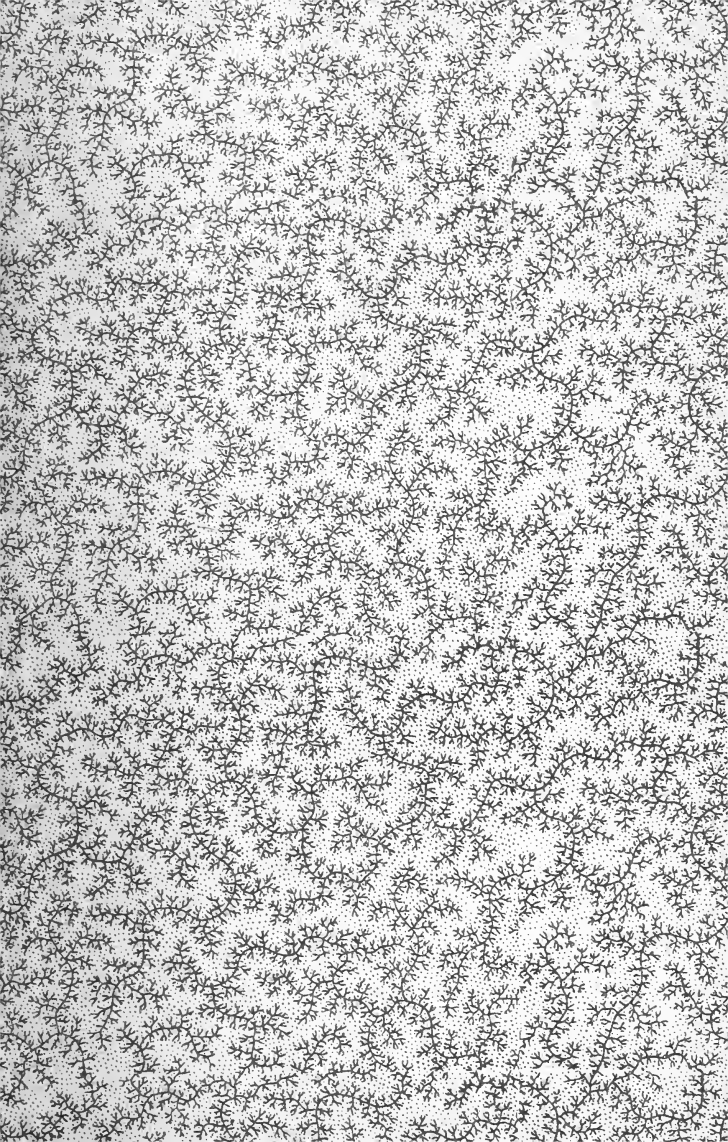






BV  
813





0 020 539 772 3